

Matthew 4:1-4

- The (first) temptation of Christ -

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Introduction

- ❖ “Why does God allow temptation? That is a question Christians often ask. Well, he allowed it for Jesus. And after a high spiritual experience, such as the baptism undoubtedly was for Jesus, temptation frequently comes, and properly comes. It sorts out the emotional ‘high’ from the reality of spiritual conquest and growth. We are not meant to live on spiritual highs. We are meant to live on the bread that comes from God alone, even if it is bread in the desert. God deliberately allows temptation. Its arrival does not mean that God’s blessing has evaporated. It simply allows the ephemeral and the emotional to be separated from the lasting. Temptation builds spiritual muscle.”¹
- ❖ The temptation of Christ reveals his true humanity as the Son of God. The devil reveals what is on a man’s mind.
- ❖ Christ was led by the Spirit and showed his wisdom and of understanding, his counsel and power, his knowledge and fear of the Lord (Isa 11:2).
- ❖ The full understanding of the temptation of Christ requires a deep understanding of the Scriptures.
- ❖ The Lord’s prayer is the opposite of the temptation of Christ and addresses the same needs, food, the will of God, the kingdom of God, in reversed order. The Lord’s prayer is the true worship of God.

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of Matthew, and it is part of a series “The temptation of Christ.” This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

¹ Green, M. (2001, p. 82).

Context

- ❖ The temptation of Christ in the desert takes place immediately after his baptism:
 - The baptism of Jesus (Mt. 3:13-17):
 - Before Jesus was baptised by John, he said: “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this **to fulfil all righteousness.**”
 - “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God** descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”
- ❖ After he has defeated the tempter, Jesus started to preach in the synagogues of Galilee:
 - Matthew summarized these sermons as follows:
 - “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**’” (Mt. 4:17).
 - In the third temptation, the devil showed Jesus the kingdoms of this world and their splendour.
 - Jesus continued and took over the ministry of John the Baptist:
 - “In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**’” (Mt. 3:1–2).
 - And later on, when Jesus sent out his twelve disciples:
 - “As you go, preach this message: ‘**The kingdom of heaven is near**’” (Mt. 10:7).
 - These two aspects, repentance and the kingdom, are prominent in the Sermon on the Mount.
- ❖ There are three main themes in the temptation of Jesus:
 - Are you the son of God?
 - How do you fulfil all righteousness?
 - And finally, to whom belongs this world, the kingdom?

Form and structure

- ❖ There are five different parts of the temptation narrative (Mt 4:1-11).

<i>Purpose:</i>	Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.
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<i>First temptation: (verse 2-4)</i>	<p>After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."</p> <p>Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'</p>
<i>Second temptation: (verse 5-7)</i>	<p>Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."</p> <p>Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"</p>
<i>Third temptation: (verse 8-10)</i>	<p>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."</p> <p>Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"</p>
<i>Result</i>	Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

Background

- ❖ A Comparison between Moses and Jesus illuminates the first chapters of the Gospel of Matthew.

Moses		Jesus	
Exodus 1:22	The killing of all the Hebrew boys in Egypt.	Matthew 2:16	The killing of all the boys in Bethlehem.
Exodus 4:22-23 and Hosea 11:1	This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." (see remark)	Matthew 2:15	And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Exodus 14 1 Corinthians 10:3	They (Israel) were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.	Matthew 3:14-17	The baptism of Jesus by John.
Exodus 15:22	Moses and the people of Israel were led into the desert	Matthew 4:1	Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.
Exodus 15:26	I am the LORD, who heals you.	Matthew 4:23	Jesus healed every disease and sickness among the people.
Exodus 19:20	The Lord descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up.	Matthew 5:1	He went up on a mountainside.
Exodus 20:1-17	The law (Ten Commandments)	Matthew 5:17	“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

❖ **Remark**

- Compare (1) Exodus 4:23 and 7:16 with Matthew 4:2 and 4:10.

Exodus 4:23	“Let my son go, so he may worship me.”
Exodus 7:16	“Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert. ”
Matthew 4:2	“If you are the Son of God. ”
Matthew 4:10	Jesus said to him (...): “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”

- Compare (2) Deuteronomy 8:2-3 with Matthew 4:1-2. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, but the context must be taken into account. See explanation.

Deuteronomy	Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the
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8:2-3	desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.
Matthew 4:1-4	Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

- In each temptation Jesus will quote from Deuteronomy (Dt 8:3 > 4:4; Dt 6:16 > 4:7; Dt 6:13 > 4:10.)

Words

❖ Verse 1:

- To be tempted = "πειράζω":
 - 2. to endeavor to discover the nature or character of something or somebody by testing, try, make trial of, put to the test.²
 - 4. to entice to improper behavior, tempt.³
 - The temptation of Christ shows both aspects. The devil wants to entice improper behaviour. Jesus will show his true nature and character.

❖ Verse 5:

- Devil = "ὁ διάβολος": one who engages in slander, *the adversary/devil*, already current in the Greek Translation of the Old Testament (The Septuagint) as a translation of שָׂטָן, satan (Job 2:1).⁴

❖ Verse 8:

² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 792).

³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 793).

⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 226).

- Glory = “δόξα” : 2. a state of being magnificent, *greatness, splendor*, anything that catches the eye: fine clothing of a king (Mt 6:29; Lk 12:27); of royal *splendor* (Mt 4:8; Lk 4:6; Rv 21:24, 26). Generally of human splendor of any sort (1 Pt 1:24; Is 40:6).⁵

❖ Verse 10:

- To worship = “προσκυνέω” : (κυνέω ‘to kiss’) is used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment, the ground, etc.; **to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure, (fall down and) worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to, welcome respectfully.** (...) The risen Lord is especially the object of worship.⁶
- To serve = “λατρεύω”: The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans: “They (= the godless and wicked men) exchanged the truth of God for a lie, **and worshipped and served** created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Final remark

- ❖ Barclay comments: “No one can ever read this story without remembering that its source must have been Jesus himself. In the wilderness, he was alone. No one was with him when this struggle was being fought out. And we know about it only because Jesus himself must have told his disciples about it. **It is Jesus telling us his own spiritual autobiography.**”⁷

Exposition

Verse 1 The purpose:

- ❖ “Then.” This is immediately after the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan by John the Baptist.
 - “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God** descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “**This is my Son**, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Mt 3:16, 17).
 - These words spoken by the voice from heaven (the voice of God) are important for the understanding of the temptation in the desert:
 - “This is my Son” (the voice from heaven) < “if you are the Son of God” (the devil).

⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 257).

⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 882-883).

⁷ Barclay, W. (2001, p. 76).

❖ **“Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert”**

- “In the same way that God put his son Israel to the test during the days of Moses, so now his son Jesus is put to the test in the wilderness.”⁸
 - “Remember how **the Lord your God led you** all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you **in order to know what was in your heart**, whether or not you would keep his commands” (Dt 8:2).
 - Lord your God = Spirit.
You (Israel) = Jesus.
 - Deuteronomy 8:5 is important: “Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.”
 - **To know what is in the heart of Jesus!**
- **“To be led by God’s Spirit has as its result perfect subjection to and performance of God’s will, as Jesus will soon prove.”**⁹
 - The temptation of Christ shows both aspects. The devil wants to entice improper behaviour. Jesus will show his true nature and character.
- Christ received the Spirit (Mt 3:16): “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord— and he will delight in the fear of the Lord” (Isa 11:2).
 - Christ will need the wisdom and understanding, counsel and power, to resist the temptation.

❖ **“to be tempted by the devil.”**

- This recapitulates the story of Israel (Deut 8:1-5) and the story of mankind (Gen 3:1-6).
- There are three “names” used: “tempter” (8:2), “devil” (8:1, 5, 8, 11) and “Satan” (8:10).
 - The devil is not an impersonal evil force, but a powerful spiritual personality.
 - Satan in the Old Testament: 1 Ch 21:1; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7; Zec 3:1–2.
 - In the Revelation of John, these names are combined in one great sign: “The great dragon, —that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan” (Rev 12:9; Rev 20:2).

⁸ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 78).

⁹ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, Vol. 1, p. 354).

- “As for Mt 4:1 and 3, the activity of the Spirit and the presence of Satan give the Greek verb *πειράζω* a double connotation: Jesus is at the same time being ‘tested’ by God and ‘tempted’ by the devil.¹⁰
- **The devil and his host of evil demons seek nothing other than the destruction of humanity and its alienation from God.**¹¹

Verse 2-4 *The first temptation:*

❖ **“After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.”**

- Like Moses and Elijah (Ex 34:28; De 9:9; 1 Ki. 19:8).
- Newman comments: “Jesus *fasted*. ‘To fast’ means to voluntarily go without food. It is sometimes done as a religious duty. The custom is known in many parts of the world and poses no translation problem, but where it is not known, the voluntary aspect of it should be included in the translation so that it does not appear Jesus did not eat simply because there was no food. Possible translations: “he had deliberately gone without food.” “He refrained from eating” would be another possibility.¹²”
- The number forty is symbolical. It refers to a period of preparation. The number forty is especially important in the context of the life of Moses. The number of days between resurrection and the ascension into heaven is also forty.
- Jesus was really hungry. This underscores his true human nature.
 - It is a situation of life and death! For how many days longer, can a man abstain from food and stay alive?

❖ **“The tempter came to him and said,”**

- Jesus didn’t come to the tempter but the tempter came to him. Jesus was awaiting him, and the tempter was awaiting the right moment.
- **“If you are the Son of God”**
 - Newman and Stine comment: “The Devil is probably not wondering whether or not Jesus is God’s Son. He assumes he is. The word *If* here is better translated ‘Since you are God’s Son,’ ‘In that you are God’s Son,’ or ‘You are God’s Son, and therefore ...’ However, it is also possible to understand him to be saying ‘If you are God’s Son, prove it by ...’¹³

¹⁰ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, Vol. 1, p. 360); Gundry, R. H. (1982, p. 55).

¹¹ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, Vol. 1, p. 356).

¹² Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 79),.

¹³ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 80).

- “Son of God” has a double connotation:
 - It refers to the true divinity of Christ.
 - It refers to the true humanity of Christ.
- Mathew 16:23 is illuminating: “Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’” The Devil has the things of men, of us, in mind. Satan, the Devil knows who Jesus is! The demon-possessed from the region of the Gerasenes knew the true identity of Jesus when he shouted: ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?’” (Lk 8:27, 28).
- **“tell these stones to become bread.”**
 - What is at stake?
 - Obedience. Faith. Love of God. And, the devil knows that Jesus is the Son of God. He has in mind the things of men. Man is looking for supernatural wonders, as a sign of the presence of God. “If you want people to believe in you, you must perform a miracle.”
 - “The devil’s aim is to break Jesus’ perfect trust in his Father’s good care (Mt 6:24–34) and thereby alter the course of salvation-history.”¹⁴

❖ **“Jesus answered, ‘It is written:”**

- Jesus refers to the authority of the Scriptures as the Word of God. “Jesus does not respond by murmuring against God. Instead, he takes up ‘the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God’ (Eph 6:17).”¹⁵
- **“Man** does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
 - Jesus identifies himself with the individual human being and with mankind in general. “For Jesus to be Son of God does not deny his humanity, but it does mean ‘that he can hear and obey God totally, leaving everything up to him.’”¹⁶ Furthermore, he affirms his true humanity.
 - Newman and Stine comment: **“to live really means more than physical existence here.** “Man’s life does not depend only on food” or “Man’s existence does not depend only on having food.” **Rather, for man to have real life,** he must have

¹⁴ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 362).

¹⁵ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, p. 362).

¹⁶ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 81).

*every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, that is, “what God speaks” or “what God commands.”*¹⁷

- “Jesus quotes Scripture, and to the effect ‘that food will not keep a man alive, unless God says that he is to live; and if God says that he is to live, he will live, whether he has food or not’”¹⁸
- What is meant by “**every word that comes from the mouth of God.**” It is interesting to note that there is a double reference to the authority of God:
 - 1. “It is written.”
 - 2. “Every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
- ❖ Further examples from scripture:
 - “He humbled you, **causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna**, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut 8:3).
 - “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Mt 5:6).
 - “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt 6:33). All these things include food (Mt 6:32).
 - “‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work’” (Jn 4:34).

Verse 5-10 What follows:¹⁹

- ❖ The second temptation is concerned with “It is written.” Do you really live by “**every word that comes from the mouth of God**”? Look at Psalm 91!
 - Jesus shows his wisdom by the Spirit by pointing to Deuteronomy 6:16: “**Do not put the Lord your God to the test**” (Mt 4.7).
- ❖ The third temptation is dealing with “the kingdoms of this world.” Satan deceives this world by showing its splendour. The splendour and power of this world are often established by oppression, the subtle oppression of the poor by the rich. The devil claims that the world as it is, is his possession and that he can give it into the hands of Jesus.

¹⁷ Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992, p. 81).

¹⁸ Plummer, A. (1909, p. 40).

¹⁹ The other two temptations have been explained in two other sermon outlines.

- Jesus knows that most people are impressed and deceived by power and splendour. He came to save the sinner, not the powerful, to restore the poor and the sick. His kingdom is from another place (Jn 18:36).

Verse 11

- ❖ Satan left Jesus and at the same time angels came **and attended him**.
 - Attended him means: they served him with food!
- ❖ the victory of 4:1–11 will have been just as much a ‘fulfilling of all righteousness’ as the submission to John’s baptism in chapter 3.²⁰

Application

Verse 1-4

- ❖ Praise the Lord Jesus Christ for:
 - His obedience to his God and Father.
 - His profound knowledge of the Scriptures.
 - His wisdom.
 - His knowledge of what’s on a man’s mind.
 - His identification with the people of Israel in the wilderness.
 - His identification with us.
 - “Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb 2:18; 4:15).
 - “Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Phillip 2:7).
 - He reveals the true son of God, which is also true for us. The true children of God will be revealed by the love of God, the obedience to God, by trust and worship.
- ❖ The authority of scripture:
 - “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Mt 4:4).
 - “Blessed are those **who hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they will be filled” (Mt 5:6).

²⁰ Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, Vol. 1, p. 354).

- “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well**” (Mt 6:31-33).

❖ The question of the Devil:

- is the question of mankind: “Why should I believe in Jesus?”
 - **The devil and his host of evil demons seek nothing other than the destruction of humanity and its alienation from God.**
- Our faith cannot be based on miracles and wonders, but only on the obedience of the Son of God.

❖ We can be tempted too:

- Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way **the tempter might have tempted you** and our efforts might have been useless” (1 Thes 3:15).
- James wrote: “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ **For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;** but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” (Js 1:13-15).
- Examples of temptation:
 - Sickness. Not to trust God, but to ask a witch doctor for help.
 - Future. Not to trust God, but ask a fortune teller for advice.

❖ We can only resist the devil by the power of Holy Spirit: “The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord— and he will delight in the fear of the Lord” (Isa 11:2).

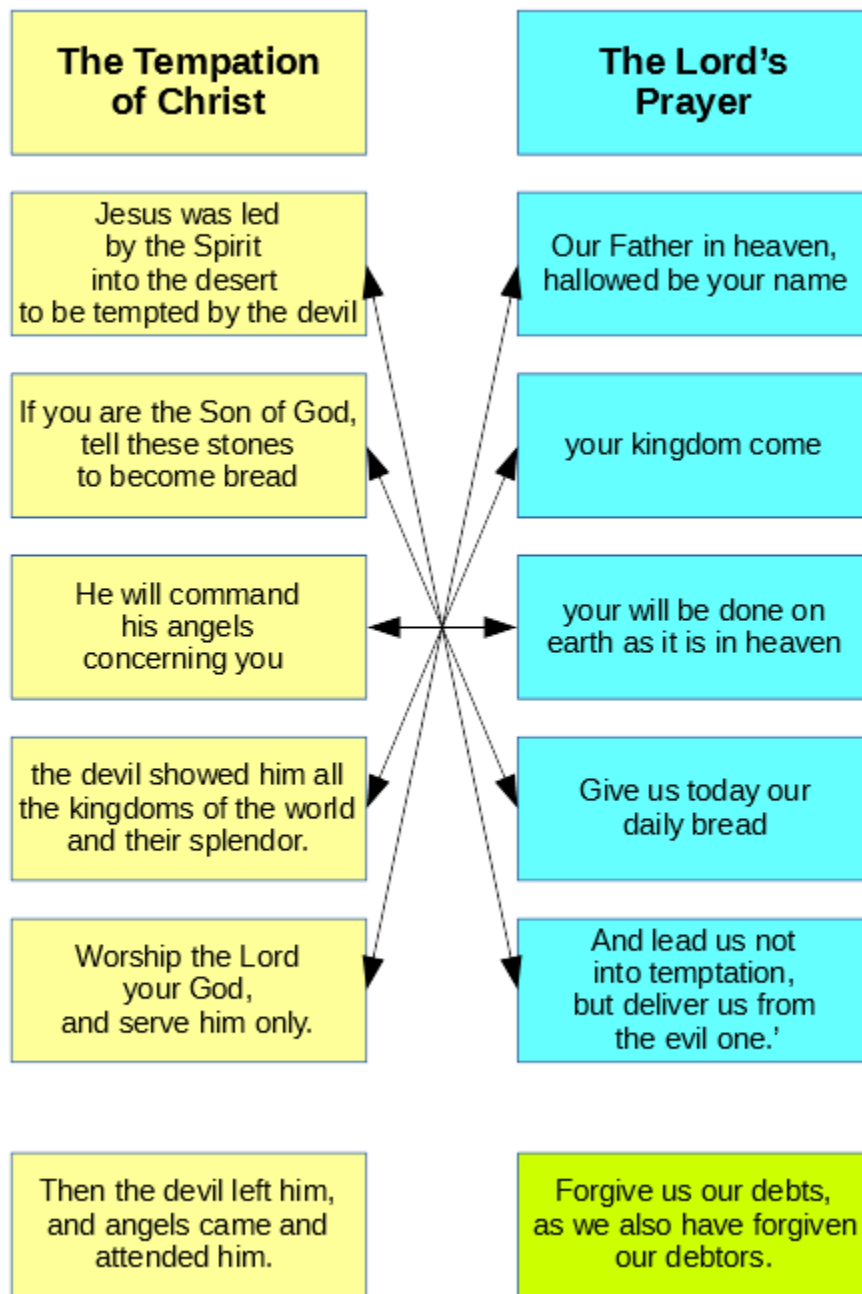
- We need his wisdom and understanding of what is happening in this world and in our lives.
- We need his knowledge of the scriptures, which is the word of God.
- We need his power to obey our God and father.

The Lord’s Prayer and the Temptation of Jesus

❖ There is a very interesting parallel between the Lord’s Prayer and the temptation of Jesus:

The temptation of Jesus	The Lord’s Prayer
Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil .	‘And lead us not into temptation , but deliver us from the evil one .’

<p>After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."</p> <p>Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"</p>	<p>'Give us today our daily bread.'</p>
<p>Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: (...)"</p> <p>Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"</p>	<p>your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'</p>
<p>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.</p>	<p>your kingdom come.'</p>
<p>"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."</p> <p>Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"</p> <p>Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.</p>	<p>'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name'</p>



Quotes²¹

- ❖ "A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is... A man who gives in to

²¹ Quotes About Temptation (338 quotes). (n.d.). Retrieved January 12, 2018, from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag?utf8=%E2%9C%93&id=temptation>

temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in.” — C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

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